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**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**MAJOR PAPER**

**COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE  
SPEAKING ABILITY IN FRENCH LANGUAGE IN  
5<sup>th</sup> GRADERS AT "BENITO JUAREZ" PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**

**LICENCIATURA EN EDUCACIÓN: LENGUAS  
EXTRANJERAS. INGLÉS CON SEGUNDA  
LENGUA (FRANCÉS)**

**Author: Daniel A. Almaguer León**

**Adviser: MSc. Deyse Matilde Fernández  
Gonzalez, Associate professor**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this major paper is to build up a system of activities to improve speaking ability in French language in a 5th grade Special Interest Group of students at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School in Santa Clara. This study highlights the importance of teaching French language to expand students’ general culture as well as what can be done to motivate them for the learning of a new language. The students’ strengths and weaknesses were assessed through the administration of different empirical methods such as interview, observation, survey and pedagogical test. The building up process of the proposal was carried out during 8 weeks following a learning research journal arrangement. The final scientific outcome was proposed, a system of communicative activities to improve speaking ability in the French language. Some transformations were achieved in the students’ speaking ability. However, although some difficulties remain, they should continue practicing French as they are highly motivated towards its learning.

## Résumée

Cette recherche a le but principal de développer un système d'activités pour grandir la production orale dans langue française dans le groupe d'intérêt spécial à l'école élémentaire Benito Juarez à Santa Clara. Cette recherche montre l'importance de l'enseignement de la langue française pour grandir la culture générale des apprenants et pour leur motiver pour apprendre une nouvelle langue. Plusieurs méthodes du niveau empiriques ont été utilisé pour accomplir la tâche prévue : l'interview, l'observation, l'enquête et l'examen pédagogique.

Le processus de construction de ce qui est proposé a été développé pendant 8 semaines à traves de l'utilisation d'un journal d'apprentissage écrit selon les expériences du professeur. Le résultat final c'est un système des activités communicatifs pour renforcer la production orale dans la langue française. Finalement quelques transformations ont été acquis par les apprenants, cependant il y a toujours des difficultés pourtant les élèves doivent continuer la pratique de la langue française.

## *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thanks to those that supported me during my studies and made possible the opportunity I have today.

To all my teachers: since first year till now.

To my adviser: because she is very patient.

To my mother: for loving me despite my mistakes and misbehavior.

To my father: for his advises and experience.

To my grandparents: for their wisdom.

To my aunts: because they love me as if were their son.

To my girlfriend and her family: now I feel part of your family.

To my closest friends: consider you the best of the gifts.

To my uncle: because you always believed in me, here I am.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The encouraging of the study of foreign languages since early ages benefits the development of abilities in the target language as well as its communicative process.

The growing expansion of French all over the world as a foreign language brings not only a great improvement in communication and friendship relations among many countries of the world, but also remarkable advances in international trade relationships, in economic, social, political and scientific fields at present.

Nowadays, the teaching of French as a foreign language is a real need all over the world, and Cuba is not an exception. The main reason is the great importance that it has acquired as a means of communication among all the countries of the world.

English language is the foreign language to be taught in Cuba in all levels of education. However, French is taught as a foreign language in Language Schools and as a second foreign language in pedagogical programs with students majoring in foreign languages education at higher levels. There is also a huge representation of the francophone community in the country, thanks to a France-Cuba Alliance. Lots of activities have been carried out in the country under the guidance and support of this Alliance in Santiago de Cuba and Havana.

That is why, the teaching of French as a foreign language cannot be carried out in an ordinary group of any level of education but through special interest group students motivated to learn another foreign language. Taking advantage of students' motivation and with the objective of spreading the teaching of French some attempts in the teaching of this language in primary and secondary schools have been tried in Santa Clara through the implementation of some proposals of exercises carried out by major paper writers. These studies have allowed students from those levels to get familiar with French language and

they have been also vocationally encouraged towards the study of a foreign language pedagogical program as well.

Due to the great importance foreign languages' learning has worldwide, and the role it plays in Cuban System of Education, it has have been decided to continue teaching French to the Special Interest Group students already organized in 4<sup>th</sup> grade at "Benito Juarez" Elementary School in Santa Clara last academic year. At that time, the students could get familiar with the French language and at the same time they were vocationally encouraged towards the study of a foreign language pedagogical program at "Marta Abreu" Central University of Las Villas. This academic year they communicated the school's principal their interest to continue practicing French.

Last academic year, the author of this present major paper implemented a system of activities to develop the speaking ability in French in the special interest group organized in 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the above mentioned elementary school. The results of the diagnosis carried out with those students at that time proved that they had a very limited knowledge about French language and the culture of French speaking countries. Regarding linguistic abilities, it was corroborated that they could hardly reproduce orally some French sounds, words and short phrases.

The proposal was partially implemented. The partial implementation achieved the objective of motivating the students to learn French as a foreign language; however, the speaking ability was developed at a low elementary level because the time to practice was not enough and the level of complexity of the activities not always matched the students' level. The communicative functions practiced were: asking and giving personal information- name, age, address, telephone number, jobs and likes and dislikes. The students were able to use this information at a reproductive level only. There were difficulties in some sounds mostly in nasal ones and in those that exist in their mother tongue but are pronounced differently in French, and in combinations of letters which sound totally different from their mother tongue sounds, the interference of Spanish in



the learning of the foreign language was clearly identified. So transformations in the students' speaking ability were hardly attained.

Therefore, the author of this study decided to develop the major paper following a qualitative approach specifically the action research method instead of continuing the quantitative one. He does not have any experience in the teaching of French as a foreign language and so it has been too difficult for him to design a proposal to teach French that could meet any students' needs in his first attempt. However, if he follows the approach of building up a proposal taking into account *what goes well, what does not go well and so making necessary changes in the lesson plan to transform the class reality*, it will permit him to offer at the end of the process a more reliable product and transformations in the learning process will be greater and meaningful.

This academic year, the author will continue teaching French to the same small group of students and the rest of the activities designed for the term paper will be considered as initial activities that could be changed, improved and enriched through different actions that may be carried out during the building up process of a scientific result.

To get more information about the teaching learning process of French as a second foreign language in Villa Clara province through Special Interest Groups, the author consulted some previous researches: A proposal of communicative activities for the development of oral skills in French was written by Guillermo Alonso Águila and José Fidel Manso Hernández (2007-2008), another attempt was a system of lessons to teach French language to secondary school students through a French club written by Sucei D'Alina Díaz Zumaquero in 2013. Félix Gabriel Arboláez Martínez and Dayana Monteagudo Chaviano (academic year 2014-2015) proposed communicative activities for the development of the speaking ability in French language too. All of them properly referred to the development of communicative skills, mainly speaking ability in French at different educational levels and offered practical solutions through several proposals of activities. All these major papers focused on the growing of students' motivation and the level the students could attain in the speaking

ability after the implementation of the proposal. Among the difficulties that were still present in the above studies carried out were: intonation pattern, lack of vocabulary in some areas, wrong conjugation of verbs and mispronunciations of some French sounds. Though, these studies were appropriated for the context they were designed to, none of them could be fully applied in the sample of this major paper because the students have their own characteristics though they are in a similar social, cultural physical and linguistic context.

The author of this study decided to continue developing speaking because they are still beginners and as Rosa Antich (1975) has stated in one of her linguistic language principles, it is primarily oral; writing is derived from speech. In order to argue this principles she refers herself to the fact that all normal people can speak but not everybody learns how to write, that people learn first to speak and then to write. Besides that during the first three weeks of the academic year it could be observed that students' mistakes in pronunciation in some sounds that are still difficult for them and in intonation were hindering the teaching learning process and the students' participation was being affected. An interview was administered to the students to know why they were having those mistakes systematically and if they really were enthusiastic to continue learning French language. Their answers were that they had not practiced French since the last lesson they had last academic year and that they felt as if they were not able to learn French and wasting their time but they were still interested in learning French.

The author is aware of the fact that speaking is: "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13) and that it is a productive skill that should be mastered by the students who are studying any language to be able to communicate simple messages. He has also reflected on the fact that speaking is a crucial ability of a second language teaching and learning process and on how difficult this ability is in French language mainly for Cuban students who are learning French as a second foreign language.

Taking into account the problematic situation previously described regarding the development of the speaking ability in French in the Special Interest Group of students from 5<sup>th</sup> grade at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School, the following scientific problem was derived.

**Scientific problem:**

How to contribute to the improvement of speaking ability in French as a second foreign language in a 5th grade Special Interest Group at “ Benito Juarez” Elementary School?

**Object of research:** The teaching learning process of French language in a 5th grade Special Interest Group at “ Benito Juarez” Elementary School.

**Field of action:** The improvement of speaking ability in French language in a 5th grade Special Interest Group at “ Benito Juarez” Elementary School.

**Objective:** To build up a system of activities to improve speaking ability in French language in a 5th grade Special Interest Group at “ Benito Juarez” Elementary School.

**Scientific Questions:**

1. What are the theoretical-methodological foundations that back up the development of speaking ability in French language?
2. What is the current situation in a 5th grade Special Interest Group of at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School regarding the speaking ability?
3. What changes could be introduced in the teaching-learning process of French language that might contribute to its improvement at 5<sup>th</sup> grade Special Interest Group from “Benito Juarez” Elementary School?
4. What transformations may occur in the subjects of research from the introduction of the changes in the building up process of the proposal?

5. What scientific result emerges from the changes introduced during the building up process of the proposal?

### **Scientific Tasks:**

1. Determination of the theoretical-methodological foundations that back up the development of speaking ability in French language.
2. Diagnosis of the current situation in a 5th grade Special Interest Group of students at " Benito Juarez" Elementary School regarding the speaking ability.
3. Determination of the changes introduced in the teaching learning process of French language and the transformations occurred in the subjects of research during the introduction of the changes in a 5th grade Special Interest Group students at " Benito Juarez" Elementary School with the backup of the group discussion.
4. Proposal of the scientific result that came out from the building up process.
5. Evaluation of the transformations that have been accomplished with the implementation of the proposal.

The following scientific methods from the theoretical and empirical levels have been administered during the research process.

#### *From the Theoretical Level:*

- Historical-logical: it was followed to describe the antecedents of the scientific problem decaled in this study and in the analysis of different sources about the development of speaking ability in French language.
- Analytic-synthetic: It was used during the whole research process but mainly to process theoretical and methodological information from

different primary sources consulted to back up the scientific problem described in the introduction of this paper.

- Inductive-deductive: It was also used during the whole research process as this paper follows the action research method and to identify regularities after the administration of different empirical instruments.
- Systemic approach: It was used to provide coherence between the different moments of the research and in the design of the final scientific result.

*From the Empirical Level:*

- Document analysis: It was used to know the treatment of the different components of speaking in the French Club Syllabus. (annex 2)
- Interview: This interview was administrated to the students to get information about reasons for their common and systematic mistakes in pronunciation, vocabulary and in grammar and to evaluate systematically their motivation to continue learning French.(annex 3)
- Participant observation: It was administered to corroborate the students' difficulties in vocabulary areas, pronunciation and grammar and to identify the transformations that took place in the students' speaking ability. (annex 4)
- Pedagogical test: It was administered to have more information about students' difficulties in vocabulary areas, pronunciation and grammar and also to determine the transformations that took place in the students' speaking ability during the process of building up the proposal. (annex 5)
- Teacher's diary: This instrument gave the author the possibility of recording what happened during the activities and his reflections about them.

- Discussion Group: It is constituted by six students and seven teachers. The group was conformed with the purpose of debating the different problems aroused from the process of research, and consequently reflecting and giving suggestions to get over these difficulties.
- Triangulation: This method allowed the author to identify the regularities about the problem detected using the data obtained through the administration of different empirical methods

All these methods were used to obtain the necessary data to verify the problematic situation already described.

*From the Statistic-Mathematical Level:*

- Percentage analysis

### **Subjects of research:**

The subjects of this research are 10 students from 5th grade at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School, with a total registration of 19 students. They were selected on purpose because the author had worked previously with them in a Special Interest Group in 4<sup>th</sup> grade due to their motivation towards the learning of French language.

## **MAIN PART:**

### **1. Theoretical and methodological background that supports the development of speaking ability in French as a foreign language.**

#### **1.1. Historical antecedents of the Teaching of French language in Cuba:**

French is taught in Cuba since last centuries, probably since late XVIII till early XIX centuries, when around 30.000 French colonists flocked into Cuba with their slaves and settled down along the whole island running away from the Haitian revolution. This let the way to a series of French customs; including the use of the language.

During Capitalism, it was taught in letter majoring (laws, etc.). Besides, it was taught in high schools as an optional subject. But, with the triumph of the Revolution international relationships change and Russian was taught because of the huge influence of Russia in our economy and the common points our countries shared in politics. English was also taught because it was used worldwide for trade and the United States was one of the most powerful and developed countries at that time, the arousal of these two languages substituted French.

Lately, in the sixties, language schools were created. Such an amount of people enrolled French that there was not room for all of them at schools. Language-teacher schools were also created, first in Havana, and then in other provinces (Santiago de Cuba and Villa Clara).

In the 80s, some Pedagogical Universities started the formation of French teachers, and also students of Spanish and Literature would take lessons of this language as a cultural aspect. Due to some changes in the syllabus, French teaching was stopped teaching at some levels of education.

The teaching of this language started later at higher educational levels in the 1990's. It was created the Instituto Superior Pedagógico de Lenguas

Extranjeras (ISPLE) in Havana and also a school for translators that taught French as well.

The teaching of this language is nowadays carried out at some universities, languages schools, and at the French Alliance.

The historical moment the country is going through, the educational revolution, and the endeavors to increase the educational level of Cuban people demand the teaching of this language in order to shape this new man required by our social system and to achieve the goal our Commander have always dreamed of, being the best educated people in the world.

The teaching of French language was included in the curriculum of the Majoring Foreign Languages at the Pedagogical Universities in 2001. The syllabus devoted to the teaching of French had among its objectives to create Clubs or Scientific Societies for students to get familiar with the French language.

As an attempt to reinsert this language in the educational system, a Canadian project was carried out in Santa Clara city. During the academic year 2005-2006, the students of ninth and eleventh grades from the school “Ernesto Ché Guevara” in Santa Clara had the opportunity to be part of that project put into practice by native people.

That project consisted of the teaching of French. A group of young teachers came from Canada to make a team-teaching with Cuban foreign language students from the pedagogical campus for a month. That gave them the possibility to practice French language, exchange knowledge; make and strengthen friendship bounds, and share the rich culture of the francophone world.

That experience was a motivation for foreign language students at the pedagogical campus to teach this language in different levels of education, at least, through Special Interest Groups, mainly in primary and secondary schools. This research is being carried out with 5<sup>th</sup> graders who had gotten familiar with some aspects related to this language last academic year. This



academic year they were interested to continue studying French language, and to improve their speaking ability.

## **1.2. The teaching learning process of French**

Through the development of language teaching throughout history the methods and approaches which have been used to teach the language, either as a foreign or second language, have been improved in order to achieve more communication in second and foreign language acquisition. Nowadays, the approach which is mostly recognized worldwide in the teaching of French, either as a foreign language or as a second language, is the Communicative Approach, also known as Communicative Language Teaching; it is “an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language is Communicative Competence”.

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as “communicative competence”. And it is understood as communicative competence the capacity students should developed in a language to be able to produce and process oral and written stretches of language.

The communicative approach is the core of the approach’s potential for being culture-sensitive. It should have a built-in facility for being culture sensitive. An important function is that the facility is to put the micro business of classroom teaching in touch with macro social context. (Holiday, 1994:173)

Finocchiaro and Brumfit’s (1983) stated, the major distinctive features of the communicative approach, for the purpose of this current research the author has selected the following as they match the aims of this paper better.

- Dialogs if used, center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized.
- Contextualization is a basic premise.

- Language learning is learning to communicate.
- Any advice which helps the learners is accepted-varying according to their age, interests, etc.
- Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning.
- Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.
- Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
- Students are expected to interact with other people, through pair and group work.
- Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in the structure of the language.

The communicative teaching of any foreign language has to work along with the principles of a communicative methodology. These principles were proposed by Keith Morrow (1981) and Neil Neiman (1989) and lately redefined by Alfredo Camacho Delgado, PH taking into account the Cuban context.

The author analyzed those principles and arrived at the conclusion that there were not significant differences among them. So he followed Neiman's ones as they seem to be simpler and easier to the author understanding, which implied a better use of them in the building up process.

➤ Meaningful practice beyond the sentence level

This principle states that an isolated word or sentence lacks meaning, to acquire a real one it should be in context and that the main goal in practice in the classroom should be the production of language with communicative purposes (orally or in writing); and to decode stretches of language as they

occur in real life (listening and reading). Students should be asked to communicate and provide meaning to the stretch of language as they occur in real life situations.

➤ Student-centered class

This principle claims that students should develop skills in the language by participating in the classroom interacting with partners and aloud. In other words, this principle implies that students should perform the main paper in the teaching learning process.

➤ Task orientation of classroom activities

This principle claims that students should be put into problematic situation close to real life ones, they should have a reason to communicate, to use the language in the classroom.

➤ Development of strategies for learning beyond the classroom

This principle acknowledges that student should learn also on their own, they should acquire abilities that allow them to study in an independent way out of the classroom and to develop the skills learned in class

➤ Peer correction and group work

This principle considers that feedback correction techniques should be used in order to help students to correct their own mistakes. The use of these techniques contributes to the development of self-correction and self-monitoring skills in the students. This allows them to fix their own mistakes or his partners' while working in groups.

### **1.3. *Development of speaking ability***

A brief analysis of the different methods applied in the world of Teaching Foreign Languages (T.F.L.) will be sufficient to understand how each one of them has considered the development of the linguistic abilities. Each method

gives priority to one or another ability. This priority depends on the objective each one pursues. The Audi-Lingual method aims at developing first oral abilities and writing meanwhile the direct method aims at the development of oral abilities first too and then writing and reading. This method considers correct pronunciation an important component for oral communication.

The reading method concentrated on reading as an easy strategy to get information from different sources. It means that speaking ability did not have the priority.

Speaking ability has been defined by different studios people. Chaney (1998) defines it as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13).

Camacho Delgado (2003), considers speaking as the ability to use the language in a fluency way for interactive communicative purposes during the oral communication. It is the use of communicative strategies and the language domain system, expressed in students` productive capacity.

Donn Byrne has stated that speaking is one of the four abilities to develop in the students. It is a productive skill that belongs to oral communication. The goal of developing speaking is oral fluency: the ability to express oneself intelligibly; that is, reasonably accurately and without too much hesitation. In the process of oral communication the speaker interacts with a listener where both change their role in the conversation (feed-back). That is to say, the speaker may become a listener and the other way around. In this interaction the speaker shows his/her understanding, he/she selects what and how to speak according to the context and where the listener does not know what the speaker is going to say.(Donn Byrne,1989)

The author of this study has analyzed the above definitions and taking into account the possibilities of the subjects of research of this major paper, speaking is considered the ability to use the language reasonably, accurately

and without too much hesitation in a more or less fluent way for interactive communicative purposes with the use of verbal and non-verbal language.

To develop speaking ability, learners should have tasks asking them to talk in the classroom and outside of it, in pairs and in groups to help each other and to create a relaxed language atmosphere and to practice and use the language beyond the sentence level. The tasks and activities assigned should take into account their weaknesses and strengths in the foreign language too. Speaking a language involves using its components correctly –vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and fluency. Pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary tasks should focus on the need of being as accurate as possible. At the same time, we also need to get a clear message across and this involves choosing appropriate content or ideas to suit a situation, e.g. deciding what is polite or what might appear rude, how to interrupt or how to participate in a conversation. All this involves practicing the language fluently. Both types of practice are equally important; the students need a model to be followed and error correction on the part of the teacher to be accurate in the use of the language is worthy and then, communicative situations demanding certain level of production in which fluency is the main goal. Some traditional approaches have concentrated too much on accuracy and this inhibits the students to communicate their message and of course this is not the main goal of the initial activities implemented during the academic year with the special interest group students.

In order to achieve freely language production, different stages for the teaching of this speaking should be followed. The use of these stages agrees with the systemic character of lessons. As they are organized taking into account the different levels of assimilation: students should first get familiar, understand, identify; then practice the stretches of language following a model and some teachers' help and later they use the language freely; that is, to have students be able to do something with the language they have learned. (E.g. talk about something; describe, give information, etc.)

The most common used model in the teaching of speaking is the so called PPP model which includes presentation, controlled practice and free practice

lessons. For the purpose of this research, it is the controlled practice stage where more emphasis will be given.

All the above theoretical and methodological information has allowed the author of this research to identify what aspects should be taken into account in the administration of the different empirical instruments to evaluate the students' strengths and weaknesses and then what initial activities should be implemented to observe, describe and reflect on students' behavior later, so as to decide what actions should be taken into account for next time the lessons will be taught.

## **2. Needs assessment**

### **Subjects of research:**

The subjects of this research are 10 fifth grade students taken from the Elementary School "Benito Juarez", with a total registration of 19 students. They were selected on purpose due to their interests toward the learning of French language through a French Club when they were in fourth grade. Therefore, the sample was chosen intentionally.

This sample represents the 52.6% of the general registration of the grade. The students are around 10 or 11 years old and they have similar psychological characteristics of the age, they learn better through the use of visual aids than through the abstract explanation of rules. It is widely known that children have an uncanny gift for language acquisition and for vocal mimicry which it would be foolish to waste, especially because it seems to be lost in adult life. The young child is believed to possess not only special powers of imitation but also greater flexibility, greater spontaneity and fewer inhibitions than adolescent or adult. The earlier a second language is learnt the more possible it is to acquire it in a way which is similar to first language learning. Children also showed higher motivation when using games as teaching aids.

The dependent variable of this major paper is speaking. The author of this study has analyzed the definitions given by Camacho (2003), Donn Byrne (1989) and

Chaney (1998) and taking into account the possibilities of the subjects of research of this paper, has defined speaking as the ability to use the language reasonably, accurately and without too much hesitation in a more or less fluent way for interactive communicative purposes, with the use of verbal and non-verbal language.

The influence of the initial activities on this variable also includes the increasing of students' cultural level by teaching another foreign language, which is not declared in the curriculum of the subjects to be taught at 5th grade.

To determine the real state of the subjects of research towards the development of speaking abilities at Benito Juarez Elementary School; the following categories and subcategories were stated.

### **Grammar**

- Conjugation of the verb être, avoir.
- Conjugation of the aller.

### **Pronunciation**

- Sounds that exist in Spanish but they are pronounced differently in French /n/ nasal, /r/.
- Sounds that do not exist in Spanish language: diphthong /eu/.

### **Vocabulary**

- Family members
- Occupations
- Moods

### **Communicative functions**

- Talking about France.
- Greeting someone and saying good bye.
- Talking about family members.

- Talking about moods.
- Talking about professions

The following scale shows the categories to evaluate the students' performance while speaking in the classroom during the activities.

In order to measure the students' current situation after diagnose, while the implementation of the proposal and the results of it after the implementation, the author had to adapt the CEFR measuring rubrics. This adaptation was done to eliminate some parameters established by CEFR because the author realized students will not be able to attain these goals and the time was not enough to work so deeply. The adaptation was done taking into account students' potentialities, first to assess their needs, then to teach them base on such needs and finally to evaluate the students and situate them in three different levels:

***Qualitative measuring rubrics:***

A1+: the students are able to understand and use familiar expressions and very basic phrases aimed at meeting your everyday needs. They introduce themselves to others and can ask and answer questions about how you feel, what your job is. Interact in a simple way if the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. The students can make mistakes, but those mistakes can not affect the communication; they should speak accurate, have the knowledge of the vocabulary that has been taught and use the correct structure in grammar.

A1-: the students are able to understand and use familiar expressions and very basic phrases aimed at meeting your everyday needs, the students can make some mistakes in pronunciation regarding accuracy and use limited vocabulary, but they cannot make mistakes in the structure of the utterances.

A0: the students speak with too much hesitation, limited vocabulary and making pronunciation mistakes mixing their mother tongue with French. There is an evident lack of knowledge about French language and the communication in this case does not come across.



The information from the diagnosis was provided by the instruments administrated to the students from the school where the research was carried out and they are the following:

### **Research Methods:**

#### **From the Empirical Level:**

- **Document analysis:** to analyze the 5th grade syllabus and the students' workbooks to know what is officially stated with respect to speaking within the teaching-learning process.
- **Interview:** This interview was administrated to the students to get information about reasons for their common and systematic mistakes in pronunciation, vocabulary and in grammar and to evaluate systematically their motivation to continue learning French.
- **In-depth interview:** To know what changes could be done in the activities that did not go well taking into account the reasons why.
- **Participant observation:** It was administered to corroborate the students' difficulties in vocabulary areas, pronunciation and grammar and to identify the transformations that took place in the students' speaking ability.
- **Pedagogical test:** It was administered to have more information about students' difficulties in vocabulary areas, pronunciation and grammar and also to determine the transformations that took place in the students' speaking ability during the process of building up the proposal.
- **Teacher's diary:** This instrument gave the author the possibility of recording what happened during the activities and his reflections about them.
- **Discussion Group:** It is constituted by six students and seven teachers. The group was conformed with the purpose of debating the different problems aroused from the process of research, and consequently reflecting and giving suggestions to get over these difficulties.

- **Triangulation:** This method allowed the author to identify the regularities about the problem detected using the data obtained through the administration of different empirical methods

#### **From the Statistic-Mathematical Level:**

- **Percentage analysis:** to process the information obtained from the application of the instruments before and after the implementation of the proposal.

#### **Analysis of the results of the instruments applied:**

##### *Analysis documents:*

In order to find out the methodological guidelines to teach Foreign Languages in Elementary School the authors made an analysis of official documents such as:

- Elementary School Syllabus
- French Language Club Syllabus

During the analysis of the Elementary School Syllabus, the authors detected that they stand that French language should provide the development of communicative skills that allow students to understand written and oral information. Moreover, the syllabus states that extracurricular activities such as clubs, glees, artistic movements and presentations, must be done so as to take advantage of students' free time. But, a French Language Club have never been in plan in the Elementary School Syllabus.

Through the analysis of the French Club Syllabus the authors could corroborate that the general objectives of the teaching of French language are:

- To get the students familiar with specific items related to linguistic and cultural aspects of the French language and culture.
- To develop the students research skill as an essential part of the clubs.

- To increase students' general culture, according to the objectives of Cuban education.

### **Category 1: Grammar**

The participant observation carried out in the classroom during the activities revealed that 5 of the students were not able to use irregular verbs, être, avoir and aller, and the 80% of the sample had most of difficulties in the plural of these verbs. The rest of the students showed only minor mistakes but were able to communicate simple ideas.

In the administration of the initial pedagogical test the results obtained were as follows, the 20% of the students were in a high level. They made few mistakes in the use of the irregular verbs, a 30% were in a medium level as the number of mistakes in the use of these verbs was higher and the remaining 50% were in a low level as they were not able to use not even one irregular verb correctly.

In the interview all the students, even those in the high level expressed with no hesitation that the conjugation of the irregular verbs dealt was very difficult for them. They also expressed that this happened because the conjugation should be learned by heart.

### **Category2: Pronunciation.**

In the administration of the pedagogical test, it came out the great difficulty students have to pronounce sounds that do not have Spanish equivalents or do not exist in their mother tongue n/ nasal, /r/ and the diphthong /eu/ which does not exists in Spanish language. All students (100%) had difficulties to pronounce the sounds that do not exist in Spanish. They could not get the required accuracy, although it did not make the communication impossible it is the author's intention to work on it systematically.

During the participant observation this problem was also revealed because all the students made mistakes in one or another sound. The analysis of the data showed that 4(40%) students related the sounds to the closest equivalent in

their mother tongue and the rest (60%) just used Spanish language instead. Most of the mistakes were done in the nasalization of /n/, the sound /r/ and the combination of vowels /eu/.

The interview aroused that some of the causes of the problems are that they have never heard these sounds or are too close to Spanish sounds which causes the mistakes in the pronunciation. These results placed the 40% in a students in the medium level and the 60% in the low level. This result forces the teacher to design and implement activities to practice as much as possible French sound system

### **Category3: Vocabulary.**

The participant observations carried out during the lessons corroborated that the 80% of the students have difficulties in mastering different vocabulary areas. The most affected areas are: family members, occupations moods.

To confirm the results obtained in the observations, a pedagogical test was applied and through this one it was verified that there were 2 students who could make reference to relatives beyond parents and brother, to five or more occupations and to more than four different moods, so they were in a high level (20%). In the second group 4 students referred to their parents, their occupations and moods commonly expressed, these belong to a medium level (40%) and the rest could only refer to parents, one, two occupations or none, among the mentioned were teacher and doctor, and regarding moods only to good or bad, that is why they were in the low level (40%).

When asking students about vocabulary, the answers revealed that some students live with their parents only or with one of them, that they have not received any vocational orientation and so it is difficult for them to name some jobs even in Spanish. It is easy to infer that to remember some jobs in French is much more difficult. These results show that they are not really motivated to learn French words. The learning of new words is one of the speaking components that students like most. It means that the teacher should find ways to motivate the students to learn French vocabulary

## **Communicative functions**

The pedagogical test, the participant observations and the interview administered to the students allowed the author to realize that it would be necessary to work on some communicative functions:

- Talking about France.
- Greeting someone and saying good bye.
- Talking about family members.
- Talking about moods.
- Talking about professions.

The 90 % of the students make mistakes in the use of one or another communicative function. None of the students are able to use one of these communicative functions without making mistakes either in pronunciation, vocabulary or in grammar. It is very common to have students who are not able to communicate a message due to the number of mistakes they make when speaking.

So, after the analysis of the categories and subcategories the students were distributed in the following way according to the adaptation of the author from the CEFR:

There was no student situated in A1+ because they were not so familiarize with the language as to use it at that level, and though some of them were able to communicate simple ideas, the command of the speaking ability in the French language was not good. In the A1- level proposed by the teacher there were 4 students, representing the 40% of the sample. These students recognized and understand familiar expressions and phrases aimed to meet their needs, mostly in the classroom to fulfill their basic needs in the classroom. In these students the accuracy was affected and the vocabulary was poor but

communication was still attained. The rest of the students (60%) were in the A0 level, they showed a limited vocabulary, hesitation at the time of producing speech, and pronunciation mistakes that did not make possible the communication. These students replaced unknown words by Spanish ones when expressing ideas.

### **Regularities**

As a result of the administration of the different empirical instruments an amount of data was obtain and analyzed, and from this analysis the following regularities were identified:

### **Weaknesses:**

- Difficulties in the pronunciation of sounds that exist in Spanish language but are pronounced differently in French. The most common mistakes are in nasal/n/, /r/, and the pronunciation of the diphthong /eu/, which does not exist in Spanish language.
- Students' vocabulary in some areas is poor, mainly in the vocabulary of the communicative functions related to family members, occupations and animals.
- Students have problems with the conjugation of irregular verbs such as être, avoir and aller.

### **Strengths:**

- Students are not afraid of making mistakes while speaking.
- They are very spontaneous in their participation classroom and in doing total physical response activities.
- Their discipline is quite good. This favors pair work and group work.

### **3. Building up process of the proposal**

This process was carried out following the structure of a learning research journal that the discussion group assumed as a guide for the development of the research paper and particularly for the building up process of the final scientific result of the major paper. One of the students of the discussion group brought to the class some pedagogical diaries she had found in INTERNET and that could help the rest of the students in recording and organizing all the information derived from the development of the major paper. The members of the group suggested some ideas to cope with the recommendations for the structure and writing of the major paper this academic year (2015-2016). Two teachers involved in the mentoring process of students' scientific papers submitted the first draft to the discussion group and the journal was finally approved (annex1).

The author of the research continued his pre service practicum in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade Special Interest Group at "Benito Juarez" Elementary School. It was corroborated since the first lessons as it was explained in the needs assessment that there were several difficulties in speaking ability in the French language. The results, identified and analyzed after the administration of different empirical instruments were taken to the discussion group. The group agreed that some activities to improve speaking ability following the established parameters in the French Club Syllabus should be design in advance. The initial system of activities should follow the communicative language teaching principles and the requirements of a system.

The discussion group also recommended that the system should be flexible to cover the students' needs as the academic year was going on. The members of the group considered some of the activities too difficult for beginners. They suggested the author to submit the initial proposal to the evaluation of at least one French teacher of the English Department. The group also recommended that the activities should be contextualized and students should be given more

information to understand better what they were supposed to do. All these suggestions were taken into account and the original proposal was finally submitted to a specialist revision before its implementation.

However, during the implementation of the initial activities some actions were design for next time.

Though the system included the necessary communicative functions, some new functions had to be added as the students showed, incidentally, difficulties with some others, mainly in their vocabulary areas when referring to family members and professions. The initial system of activities was composed by 16 activities, most of them to work individually or in pairs and for presentation and controlled practice stages only as elementary school students in a Special Interest Group to learn French cannot achieve the free practice because there are not many classes per communicative functions. There is only one hour a week. Besides, French is taught as an extracurricular activity and though the students are motivated they do not have much time.

The general objective of the proposal is to improve the students speaking ability in the French Language in 5<sup>th</sup> graders at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School through a system of activities that allow the students practicing the content delivered in lessons as a part of the French Club. The system of activities is aimed to improve speaking in the most affected communicative functions.

In order to introduce changes and improve the quality of a further proposal the author recorded the results attained after the implementation of each activity by taking down notes about what worked or not in the activity, the participation of the students, their reactions and the causes of any irregularity if existed and reflecting on the mistakes either his or students’. It is worthy to mention that the activities integrate some communicative functions in order to give them systemic character.

The first activity is aimed to the first communicative function *talking about France* and La Francophonie. In this activity the students hesitate a little in the third item but it was easy to answer after the teacher supported them with tips.



The second activity dealt with general information about France, its geographic situation, capital, and currency. The students' knowledge was quite accurate; they answered the first and second questions very fast because this country as well as its capital is dealt commonly in the Media and films, but some missed the answer in the third item. When they were interviewed they answered that it was the dollar because it is the currency of the USA, a country with great influence around the world and that they have never seen that type of coin. However these were just a few and the doubt was cleared out and the mistakes fixed after an explanation. For further attempts the information should be included in lesson number one.

The third activity tried to enrich the symbols and landmarks of France, there was hesitation to identify the items. Through a depth interview to the students, the author could know that it happened because the images illustrated elements not so representative of France but it was easier to answer after the teacher supported them with tips. So the teacher assigned as homework making a research about the most representative symbols in France, and next time the teacher made some modifications in the activity, changing the elements for those internationally known. The students were eager to answer showing domain of the content, the only difficulty was that they wanted to talk all at the same time.

The regularity in these activities was that the students answered the activities in their mother tongue and the teacher had to call their attention and made them repeat the answer in French.

Regarding greetings and ways of saying good bye, activity four and five were really easy to perform for the students and were planned for presentation stage, they were able to repeat and interact among them and they really enjoy peer work, they also correct their mates' mistakes. It happened that way because it is proper from children the characteristic of appropriate vocabulary in the oral way. Besides that the imitation is the basic strategy for language learning, a conscious imitation repetition guided by the teacher tolerant but demanding. The teacher realized that it was necessary more oral practice for a controlled

practice stage in order to attain accuracy, so it was planned a second controlled practice lesson forwards.

The sixth activity was useful to deal with the communicative function asking how someone is, giving special treatment to the pronunciation of some sounds especially sound /n/, and /r/ when talking about moods and the activity was for the presentation stage. They related the moods easily with different situations given by the teacher and supported by images. The sounds mentioned above were very difficult because they exist in Spanish, but are pronounced differently, that why it was not easy for students to produce it accurately.

Activities seven and eight belong to controlled practice stage, in the seventh activity students had to fill the blank with the moods they know. The activity was done in teams and it worked but the teacher after checking the activity in each team chose only one couple from each team to perform the dialogue in front of the class. The teacher had to choose only one from each group to have enough time for activity eight. Once more, the competition and collaboration among students was observed and this brought about a high quality in students' answers. It was attained such a quality due to the advantages of group work, its collaborative character and the co-evaluation it allows.

Activity eight was performed by all the students and they should change the moods differently each time. It was too difficult because they were not so familiarized with the vocabulary, so the teacher allow repeating some but trying not to lose the originality and the communicative purpose of the activity, this way one of the principles of CLT would be attained. To avoid such situations it is recommended to work deeply with the area of vocabulary in the presentation stage. It was also necessary to recall the communicative situation for students to understand the purpose of the activity and how to use the communicative function.

The activity was planned to be performed in pairs, but the teacher made some transformations because this area of vocabulary was one of the most affected according to the results of the need assessments, so the students needed more help, the teacher changed the organization in the activity to teams and it was easier for them to attain the objective. The teacher intentionally asked the

students in the low level for the answer. It was incredible the way students supported each other; this made them feel more confident and encourage them to participate. This was an activity for semi controlled practice stage. It is recommended to give the students a chart with the members of the family so they would only have to relate identify them.

The last activity integrates the following communicative functions: greeting someone and saying good bye, asking and saying how someone is, talking about family members and talking about jobs. It also integrates the different components of speaking: grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. All these made the group of activities a system. In this activity students could integrate the different contents learned in a communicative situation. This integration was necessary to be done to make the activity more meaningful after the teacher realized that these communicative functions could be related each other in the same communicative situation. The dialogue from activity eight was enhanced with the new communicative functions: talking about family members and talking about professions. The teacher had to stop to explain the conjugation of the verb -faire because they had to change it to third person when referring to their relatives. As this verb is not included in the French Club Syllabus and it is irregular. It is recommended to replace the question: Qu'est-ce que vous faites dans la vie? by Quel est votre profession?

#### **4. Analysis of the results of the implementation of the proposal of communicative activities.**

**Pedagogical test:** To evaluate students' transformations in speaking ability in French language.(Annex 7)

##### *Categories taken into account*

Communicative functions evaluated:

- Greeting someone and saying good bye.
- Talking about family members.
- Talking about moods.
- Talking about professions.

Grammar:

- Conjugation of verbs: *être* and *aller*

Pronunciation:

- Sounds that exist in Spanish language, but are pronounced differently in French.

Vocabulary:

- Family members
- Occupations
- Moods

**Participant observation:** To evaluate students' transformations. (Annex 6)

*Categories taken into account*

Communicative functions evaluated:

- Greeting someone and saying good bye.
- Talking about family members.
- Talking about moods.
- Talking about professions.

Grammar:

- Conjugation of verbs: *être* and *aller*

Pronunciation:

- Sounds that exist in Spanish language, but are pronounced differently in French.

Vocabulary:

- Family members
- Occupations

## ➤ Moods

During the implementation of the proposal of communicative activities and at the end of it the instruments mentioned above were administered in order to corroborate changes in the subject of research and to give them a new classification according to the rubrics they were evaluated during the needs assessment. In this instrument not all the subcategories are evaluated because it was impossible, but the participant observation carried out during the process of implementation give enough information to the author to measure those that could not be evaluated in the final pedagogical test.

The analysis of the data obtain from the needs assessments arouse that there was no student in A1+ level since they were not so familiarized with the language as to use it at that level, and though some of them were able to communicate simple ideas, the command of the speaking ability in the French language was not good. There were 4(40%) in the A1- level, these students recognized and understand familiar expressions and phrases aimed to meet their needs, mostly in the classroom to fulfill their basic needs in the classroom. In these students the accuracy was affected and the vocabulary was poor but communication was still attained and the rest (60%) were in the A0 showing clear deficiency in the speaking ability in French language and some of its components. They showed a limited vocabulary, hesitation at the time of producing speech, and pronunciation mistakes that did not make possible the communication. These students replaced unknown words by Spanish ones when expressing ideas.

The instruments administered to measure the first category in the Needs Assessments revealed that 2 students (20%) made minor mistakes in the use of irregular verbs, 3 students (30%) made more mistakes were still able to communicate some ideas and the rest of the subject (50%) was not able to use a single irregular verb.

Through the participant observation it was stated for the category pronunciation that all students (100%) had problems with the pronunciation of sounds in French language, mainly in those that exist in the students' mother tongue but

are pronounced differently such as /n/ and /r/ or those that do not exist like the diphthong /eu/.

Before the implementation of the proposal a pedagogical test was applied to verified the information obtain through the participant observation regarding vocabulary. There were 2 students who could make reference to relatives beyond parents and brother, to five or more occupations and to more than four different moods, so they were in a high level (20%). In the second group 4 students referred to their parents, their occupations and moods commonly expressed, these belong to a medium level (40%) and the rest could only refer to parents, one, two occupations or none, among the mentioned were teacher and doctor, and regarding moods only to good or bad, that is why they were in the low level (40%).

From the administration of the instrument at the end of the implementation of the proposal of communicative activities and the participant observation carried out during this one it could be corroborated the students' advantages in each of the components of language. In the use of the irregular verbs only 3 students (30%) were able to use at least two verbs in a correct way and communicate ideas in a clear way, 5 students (50%) were able to master one irregular verb correctly and a second one with some incoherence in some occasions but their performances allowed the understanding and at the same time made communication possible. Only 2 students (20%) from the subject were not able to conjugate at least a verb correctly, the tried to express ideas but mistakes were too common still. The principle problem remaining was with verb aller.

Pronunciation was a category with a great improvement after the implementation of the proposal of communicative activities. Although there was only one student(10%) that could rich the high level making minor mistakes in sounds that do not exist in Spanish, as diphthong /eu/ is, a considerable 70% of the students eliminate mispronunciation in the existing sound in their mother tongue that are pronounced differently in French language(/n/, /r/), almost in their majority. The other students (20%) could not get to a higher level but showed some improvement, they stopped using Spanish when ask for an

answer. It is not an achievement in pronunciation, but in motivation and in speaking ability in general because once they talk French the teacher can make correction techniques in these students.

The vocabulary showed the best of the results after the implementation of the activities. There were 3 students who could make reference to relatives beyond parents and brother, to five or more occupations and to more than four different moods, so they were in a high level (30%). In the second group 6 students referred to their parents, their occupations and moods commonly expressed, these belong to a medium level (60%) and the student in a low level (10%) could only refer to parents, two occupations, and regarding moods only to good or bad or synonyms.

Once the results of final pedagogical test and the data of the participant observation were analyzed the teacher made a new distribution of the students according to their command on the speaking ability. From the subject of research 2 students (20%) reached the A1+ level although with minor mistakes in speaking ability, they were able to communicate simple ideas, the command of the speaking ability in the French language good enough how to exchange basic information about themselves. Besides they were very accurate in the pronunciation, made correct use of vocabulary and used the appropriated structure in each communicative function. Six of the students (60%) were situated at A1- level because they recognized and understood familiar expressions and phrases aimed to meet their needs in the classroom and sometimes beyond to fulfill their basic needs. In these students the accuracy was affected and the vocabulary was not enriched properly, but communication was still attained. The rest of the students (20%) did not showed improvements enough remarkable to get to a higher level. The situation regarding speaking ability in French language for these two students remained almost the same; the only improvement the teacher could achieve was the participation in classes in a more active way.

## **5. Proposal of communicative activities for the improvement of speaking ability in French language in fifth graders:**

The system of activities designed is backed up by philosophical, pedagogical and methodological judgments and it is aimed to improve the speaking ability in the 5<sup>th</sup> graders at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School.

The current research is based on the Marxist-Leninist philosophy which contributes the grounds to interpret it as a stage in the process of research. It expresses that practice is the supreme end of the scientific activity, not only because it generates the theoretical activity as a result of the verification of the contradictions manifested on it; but also because is on it where is proved the veracity of the hypothesis.

The statement above is complemented with V.I. Lenin’s words: “El punto de vista de la vida, de la práctica, debe ser el punto de vista primero y fundamental de la teoría del conocimiento”. (V.I. Lenin: Materialismo y empiriocriticismo, p.150.) It is appreciated the relation between practice-theory-practice enriched, this relation manifests the scientific method, which logic expresses the way to scientific knowledge, as knowledge theory, grounded on the dialectic laws. That is why it is necessary to use the scientific method as a basis of the stated problem.

The authors have based the proposal on the Marxist-Leninist precepts mentioned above.

The psychological precepts of the research are based on the work of the Soviet pedagogue L.S. Vygotsky, who proposed that each stage or period is characterized by a social state of human development and that precisely the driving forces of mental development are the contradictions. On the base, these provisions were identified overall needs of students in Elementary School, the characteristics of student body as well as emotional and socio-cultural context that surrounded them. (L.S. Vygotsky, 1987).

“What the child is able to do in collaboration today, he will be able to do independently tomorrow”. Lev Vygotsky



To Vygotsky, learning is a social activity, and not just a process of individuality as it has been held, a production and reproduction activity of knowledge through which the child assimilates modes of activity and interaction, and later in school, as well, the basic scientific knowledge, under conditions of orientation and social interaction. (Taken from: Colectivo de autores. Tendencias Pedagógicas contemporáneas CEPES: Universidad de la Habana, p.p. 155-175).

Pedagogically, this research is backed up by the Socialist Pedagogy. This pedagogy claims the need of an active and conscious involvement of the students in the teaching learning process so that the students become not only the object of education but its subject. This kind of participation occurs when there is the need that encourages the students to learn as every human action is determined, motivated, and influenced by the need to accomplish a goal.

This proposal is methodologically based on the communicative approaches. The communicative teaching of any foreign language has to work along with the principles of a communicative methodology. These principles were proposed by Keith Morrow (1981) and Neil Neiman (1989). The authors selected those that fulfill the proposal's objective. Among them it can be found: meaningful practice beyond the sentence level, student-centered class, and task orientation of classroom activities.

#### *Characteristics of the proposal:*

The proposal consists of a system of activities to develop speaking abilities in French in the 5<sup>th</sup> graders from "Benito Juarez" Elementary school. In order to design a system of activities to the teaching of French language, different concepts of system were analyzed:

- a staff of teachers from the CECIP at the UCP "Félix Varela" which define a system as a pedagogical and scientific result as an analytical construction supported by theoretical principles which aims at the optimization of a pedagogical system and the achievement of certain results in the educative practice and the improvement of the existing ones....a system emphasizes on the static and structural aspects of the object of study without altering its dynamic aspect, and as a scientific and

pedagogic result, a system must meet the general characteristics of all systems: completeness, centralization, hierarchism and integrity.

- According to Webster's Dictionary (1893:895), a system is a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole.
- On the other hand, Grijalbo's Dictionary (s.a:874) defines a system as: an arranged and coherent whole of rules, norms or principles related to certain matter. Is an organized whole of things, means, and ideas that contributes to a same goal.
- Whereas, Von Bertalanaffy cited by Rodriguez, A. (2010:35-36); defines system as: A whole of interrelated elements and also provides the following features:
  - A system is a way of existence of the objective reality.
  - The systems of the objective reality can be studied and represented by man.
  - Man also creates systems with fixed aims.
  - A system is a whole of elements distinguished by certain kind of arrangement.
  - A system has relative limits; they can only be separated to study them with determined purposes.
  - Each system belongs to a wider system, it is connected and stands apart from another system.
  - Each element of a system can be assumed as a whole.
  - The idea of system is wider than the idea of sum of the parts that compose it.

The authors affiliates to the concept of system given by a staff of teachers from the CECIP at the UCP "Félix Varela", because it is the most suitable to the proposal's objective.

The proposal has a systematic and systemic character because there is a connection between them in which the contents are connected and use in the teaching of others as support. Also in each of the topics the difficulties detected

in the diagnosis are treated in a communicative way to accomplish one of the most important principles of CLT.

The author of this research offers a system of activities that might have a great value to develop the students speaking ability in the teaching of French in Elementary Schools in Santa Clara. The activities were put into practice, so the proposal is just fully implemented.

The system designed counts with a total of 10 activities in correspondence to the different communicative functions mentioned above taken from the French Club Syllabus. The general objective of these activities is to develop the students speaking ability in the French Language in Elementary Schools. Due to there was not a record of French language teaching in the curriculum of Primary Schools the system of activities follows the order given in the French Club Syllabus to the different topics that must be taught.

Moreover, most of the activities were designed for the controlled practice stage in which the students are supposed to reproduce the communicative functions correctly. The entire proposal can be found in (Annex 8.)

The activities were designed considering these aspects: Objective, Material Aids, and Procedure.

## **Activity**

### **Activité 3 :**

**Titre : Connaissant la France**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe: en couple**

**Objective :** les étudiants devront se familiariser avec la langue française et les symboles de la France afin de développer leur culture générale en se servant des exercices oraux.

1. Vous venez d'arriver de la France et une amie te demande quelques questions pour connaître ce que vous avez appris dans votre voyage. Montrez à votre amie les photos que vous avez fait avec les symboles.
  - Quel sont les symboles qui caractérise la France ?

- A. Le drapeau
- B. L'arc du Triomphe
- C. La fleur de lys
- D. La tour Eiffel
- E. Le Louvre



Procédures : Le professeur écrira au tableau une liste avec les symboles de la France, puis il va montrer aux étudiants les images. Les étudiants devront dire oralement la bonne réponse.

Matériel: des photos avec quelques symboles représentatives de France.

## Conclusions

- The development of the speaking ability in French in 5<sup>th</sup> graders at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School is based on a communicative perspective which implies the ascription to the theoretical and methodological foundations of the communicative approach to language teaching.
- The diagnosis instruments implemented reveal that though the Elementary School Syllabus states very clearly that students should develop clubs as an alternative to improve their vocational interests, the existence of a French Language Club has never been in plans. It also revealed that the students have some difficulties within speaking ability in the grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. It was necessary to take some actions.
- Most of the changes carried out in the system of activities are related to the organization of the activities, there are not so much individual activities. Besides, the aids like images or pictures had to be more illustrative for the students’ learning, and the activities were mostly needed of simple answers in oral way.
- The subject of research became more confident to participate in classes and to debate after the activities. They recognized and reproduced the communicative functions in the system and were able to conjugated most of the irregular verbs dealt with in the activities. Their vocabulary area expanded and it allowed them to make more complex utterance within a conversation. The students’ pronunciation didn’t show the advantage the author would have liked it to, any way they improved speaking ability in a perceptible way since the higher percent of the students situated between the high and medium level.
- The final scientific outcome that emerged from the building up process of the proposal was a System of communicative activities to improve the speaking ability in French language.

## **Recommendations**

After the implementation of the proposal and the evaluation of its results it is the intention of the author to do the following recommendations in order to improve the quality of it.

- The use this system of activities as a consulting material for further researches.
- Take the system of activities and implement it in other school looking for results and regularities.
- Emphasize on the vocabulary and the accuracy in the pronunciation of the students.

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# **Annexes**

## **Annex 1:**

TITLE: MODEL OF A LEARNING RESEARCH JOURNAL

THE LEARNING RESEARCH JOURNAL offered in this paper has been used by 4th and 5th year students majoring in Foreign Languages at “Félix Varela Morales” Pedagogical Campus from “Marta Abreu” Central University during the School year 2015-2016 while building up their scientific outcome as part of their term and major papers respectively.

STRUCTURE OF THE LEARNING RESEARCH JOURNAL

### I. General information:

Student's name:

Majoring in:

Year:

Name of the School (practicum):

Grade you teach:

### II. Context

#### 1. Physical context

1.1. Community

1.2. School

#### 2. Psychological context

2.1. Psychological characteristics of the students according to their age

2.2. Psychological characteristics present in the students subjects of research

2.3. Psychological characteristics that favor the teaching learning process of the English language

2.4. Psychological characteristics that hinder the teaching learning process of the English language

#### 3. Social context:

- 3.1. Problematic situation identified in the subjects of research.
- 3.2. Scientific problem
- 3.3. Regularities derived from the needs assessment
- 4. Textual or linguistic context

Some Linguistic elements necessary to carry out the process of building up the scientific outcome.

### III. Features of the narrative text

a) A *narrative text* tells a story about one incident or happening and provides details that are connected to the incident: who, what, where, when, or how.

The details give answers to the following questions:

- Who was involved in the incident?
- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it happen?

The format of this type of text is like this:

Beginning paragraph: arouse interest and suggest what is coming next
Middle paragraphs: give details about the incident and lead to the climax or most important event
Ending paragraphs: tell the outcome of the incident

IV. Some useful connectors( They must be organized taking into account the semantic relation they express)

- **Copulativos** and, not only ... but also ..., not only ... but ... as well, both ... and ..., no sooner ... than
- **Disyuntivos** or, either ... or ..., neither ... nor ..., whether ... or ..., else, otherwise

- **Conditionals** if, whether, unless, provided, providing, as long as, in case, in case of
- **Concesivos** although, though, even though, even if, despite, in spite of, not even if, regardless of
- **Conclusivos** therefore, hence, thus, so, consequently
- **Continuativos** then, moreover, furthermore, besides, in addition to
- **Adversativos** but, however, nonetheless, yet, still, on the other hand, instead, instead of, on the contrary
- **Causales** because, for, because of, as a result of, due to, owing to, since, as
- **Comparatives** as, as ... as ..., not as ... as ..., not so ... as ..., just as ... so ..., as if, as though
- **Funcionales** so, so that, so as to, so as not to, in order to

V..Some useful gambits: (Taken from Conversation gambits. Real English Conversation Practices (Keller and Warner) and adapted to be used in written scientific texts.

- Breaking in (I am interested in..., certainly)
- Interrupting the topic one is writing about(I'd like to comment on..., I'd like to express that...,to return to the topic/to get back to what I was stating...
- Expressing actions in order/ writing the process as it happens (first, first of all/to begin with, then/so/so then/ after that/ next, finally/at the end)
- Giving explanations ( the main reason is..., the other reason is.../another reason is...., besides that, and on the top of that, and finally)
- Expressing the main thing (first of all, the main thing is..., the most important thing is...)
- Expressing the main problem (the real problem is..., the point is...,the awful thing is...)
- Communicating a surprising fact (readers may not believe it, but..., it main sound strange but...)

- Giving opinions (I think that..., it is my opinion that..., I am convinced that...)
- Guessing causes/reasons( perhaps it is..., I think it is..., it is difficult to say, but I would guess...)
- Expressing conviction ( I honestly feel that..., I am convinced that, I am absolute certain that...)
- Expressing personal opinions( In my opinion..., I personally believe/ think/ feel..., not everyone will agree with me, but... )
- Planning things to do (what I Had in mind was..., what I had plan to do was...)
- Adding things (To start with, and another thing, what is more, just a small point)
- Giving a reason(also, and besides, in addition, not to mention the fact that..., not only that, but...)
- Giving reasons for something one did not do( the reason why..., because..., because of that..., that is why..., that is the reason why..., for this reason...)
- Explaining what is wrong ( but in fact, but actually, the truth of the matter is...)
- Giving a second glance (First glance at first glance it looks as if.../we take it for granted that.../it seems as if... Second glance :but in fact/ in reality/ the fact of the matter is.../but actually)
- Giving counter arguments (focus group) even so, even if that is so, that may be so, but..., that is probably true, but....)
- Taking achievements and difficulties into consideration (bearing in mind... considering..., if you/ we remember... )
- Seeing the good side- being optimistic- (anyway, even so, but in the long run -think on a longer time scale, generally speaking, as a rule, in my experience)
- Illustrating our point (for example, for instance, take for example, to give you an idea)
- Finishing your reflections (so, in short, so, to sum up)

## VI. Building up of the process of the scientific outcome.

1. Communicative function to deal with in the lesson
2. Ability to deal with in the lesson (in the case of speaking ability, add the stage)
3. Objective of the lesson
4. Number of activities/ exercises/tasks/techniques in the lesson
5. Activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s) designed to practice the ability/language component identified with difficulties.
6. Reflections (participant observations and interviews to students included in the teacher's diary)

### 6.1 What went well

6.1.1. Proof (quality of students' answers, complexity of activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s), number of students that participate in the lesson, motivation, time allotted, etc.).

6.1.3 . Reasons (potentialities of activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s) used, from the psychological, pedagogical and didactic points of view).

### 6.2. What did not go well

6.2.1 . Proof (quality of students' answers, complexity of the activity (-ies) / exercise(s) /task/(s)/ technique(s), number of students that participate in the lesson, motivation, students' discipline, students' satisfaction, etc.).

6.2.2. Reasons (weaknesses of the activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s) used from the psychological, pedagogical and didactic points of view)

6.2.3. Action (s): what must be changed/ improved for next time.

6.2.4. Pedagogical reflection (identify strengths and weaknesses using the following questions as a guide:

- Was the objective of the lesson fulfilled?
- Could all the planned activity (-ies) / exercise(s) /task/(s)/ technique(s), done? Why/ not?
- What did the students like most?



- How would you evaluate students' personal reactions(individual and group performances) when doing the activity (-ies) / exercise(s) /task/(s)/ technique(s) that you implemented during the lesson(verbal and non-verbal reactions)
- What could you infer from the students' reactions?

VII. Evaluation of the transformations in the subjects of research (participant observation, pedagogical test, analysis of the students' outcomes, interview, triangulation)

VIII. Final scientific outcome

IX. Meaningful experience (personal and professional achievements)

## **Annex 2**

### **Document analysis**

Objective: to analyze the methodological suggestions given by official documents about the teaching of foreign language to Primary School students.

Documents analyzed:

- Primary School Syllabus.
- French Club Syllabus.

### **Aspects to consider**

1. Methodological suggestions towards the teaching of a foreign language in 4th grade.
2. Learning outcomes while teaching cultural items.
3. General and specific objectives to achieve while teaching French language.
4. General objective of Elementary School.

## **Annex 3**

### **Interview:**

Objective: Objective: to measure students' previous knowledge about France and the French language and their preferences to work in classes.

**Note:** the questions were done in Spanish for students' better comprehension and to obtain valuable information.

### **Categories**

- .General knowledge about France and French language
- Knowledge about French speaking countries
- Knowledge about French culture
- Activities they like most to practice the language

### Guide

¿Has oído hablar del idioma francés?

¿Qué conoces acerca de la lengua francesa?

¿Podrías mencionar algunos países de habla francesa? ¿Sabes en qué continente se encuentra ubicada Francia?

¿Podrías mencionar algún símbolo de Francia? Ejemplo, algún monumento, ciudad, personajes históricos, animados, del ámbito cultural o deportivo.

¿Qué tipo de actividades te gustaría realizar durante las clases de francés?

¿Qué te gustaría aprender del idioma francés?

¿Hay algún elemento de especial interés para ustedes acerca del tema?

#### **Annex 4:**

##### **Participant Observation:**

##### **Observation guide to French classes in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at “Benito Juarez” Elementary School**

*Subject:* French

*Class:* all lessons

*Year:* 5<sup>th</sup> grade

*Objective:* Evaluate students’ development of the speaking ability in French during the first lessons.

*Kind of observation:* participant observation

*Subjects of the observation:* the students

*Time of the observation:* French club lessons (45 min.)

*Categories observed:*

- Students’ motivation toward the learning of French
- Students’ participation during the lesson
- Quality of the students’ answers
- Students participation directed by the teacher
- Corroborate students’ difficulties
- Behavior

## **Annex 5**

### **Pedagogical test:**

1. Nommez les membres de votre famille.
2. Qu'est qu'ils fait dans la vie?
3. Répétez après le professeur

Monsieur      Deux      au revoir      appeler      faire      travailler

Danseur      maison      bonjour      tableau      campagne

4. Partagez avec vôtres amies les connaissances que vous avez sur la France.

## **Annex 6**

### **Participant observation:**

Objective: To evaluate students' transformations in speaking ability in French language.

#### *Categories taken into account*

Communicative functions evaluated:

- Greeting someone and saying good bye.
- Talking about family members.
- Talking about moods.
- Talking about professions.

Grammar:

- Conjugation of verbs: *être* and *aller*

Pronunciation:

- Sounds that exist in Spanish language, but are pronounced differently in French.

Vocabulary:

- Family members
- Occupations
- Moods

Aspects to consider:

Remaining mistakes in pronunciations.

The correct use of the communicative functions.

The appropriate use of grammar, mainly irregular verbs.

The use of the different areas of vocabulary studied.

The quality of participation of the students.

## **Annex 7**

**Pedagogical test:** To evaluate students' transformations in speaking ability in French language.

It was taken as pedagogical test activity # 10 in which most of the contents are integrated.

### *Categories taken into account*

Communicative functions evaluated:

- Greeting someone and saying good bye.
- Talking about family members.
- Talking about moods.
- Talking about professions.

Grammar:

- Conjugation of verbs: *être* and *aller*

Pronunciation:

- Sounds that exist in Spanish language, but are pronounced differently in French.

Vocabulary:

- Family members
- Occupations
- Moods

### ***Qualitative measuring rubrics:***

A1+: the students are able to understand and use familiar expressions and very basic phrases aimed at meeting your everyday needs. They introduce themselves to others and can ask and answer questions about how you feel,



what your job is. Interact in a simple way if the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. The students can make mistakes, but those mistakes can not affect the communication; they should speak accurately, have the knowledge of the vocabulary that has been taught and use the correct structure in grammar.

A1-: the students are able to understand and use familiar expressions and very basic phrases aimed at meeting your everyday needs, the students can make some mistakes in pronunciation regarding accuracy and use limited vocabulary, but they cannot make mistakes in the structure of the utterances.

A0: the students speak with too much hesitation, limited vocabulary and making pronunciation mistakes mixing their mother tongue with French. There is an evident lack of knowledge about French language and the communication in this case does not come across.

## Annex 8

### Proposal of communicative activities to improve speaking ability.

## Thème1 : Information culturelle sur la France.

**Objective :** À la fin de ces premiers exercices, les étudiants devront se familiariser avec la langue française et les symboles de la France afin de développer leur culture générale en se servant des exercices oraux.

**Note :** Les exercices sont pour pratiquer un contenu déjà étudié.

### Activité 1

**Titre : Connaissant la langue française.**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe: en groupe**

2. Vous venez d'arriver de la France et une amie te demande quelques questions pour connaître ce que vous avez appris dans votre voyage.

- I. Comment s'appelle l'organisation mondiale qui groupe les pays franco parlants ? – (Réponse : la Francophonie)
- II. Quel lieu occupe la langue française dans le monde ? – (Réponse : 3me.)
- III. Quel est la principale institution de la langue française à Cuba ? – (Réponse : Alliance Française)
- IV. Quelles autres institutions enseignent la langue française à Cuba ? (Réponse : école de langues, l'université.)



**Procédures :** Le prof va organiser les étudiants en groupes (2) et après il va leur donner des petites feuilles de papier avec des questions. Chaque question aura un chiffre, les équipes choisiront un chiffre qui correspondra avec une question. Puis un étudiant de chaque équipe va répondre oralement. L'autre équipe va corriger les erreurs. Les questions sont pour développer une culture générale sur la France et la langue Française.

## Activité 2

### Titre : Connaissant la France

**Duration: 10 minutes**

### Organisation de la salle de classe:

La même situation communicative est donnée aux étudiants.

a) Où se trouve la France ?

\_\_\_ en Amérique

\_\_\_ en Europe

\_\_\_ en



Asie

Procédures : Le professeur va montrer aux étudiants une carte, où ils devront trouver et dire oralement dans quel continent se trouve la France.

Matériel: une carte mondiale

b) Quelle est le capital de la France ?

\_\_\_ Paris

\_\_\_ Marseille

\_\_\_ Lion

\_\_\_ Bordeaux



Procédures : Le professeur écrira au tableau une liste avec les villes les plus importantes de France, puis il va montrer aux étudiants les images. Les étudiants devront dire oralement la bonne réponse.

Matériaux : des images représentatives de différentes villes françaises.

**c) Quel est la monnaie de la France ?**

\_\_L'euro



\_\_Le franc



\_\_Le dollar



Procédures : Le professeur demandera aux étudiants quel est la monnaie de la France. Avant que les apprenants répondent ils vont voir des images avec différentes monnaies. Les étudiants devront dire oralement la bonne réponse.

Matériel: des images de monnaies

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**Activité 3 :**

**Titre : Connaissant la France**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

La même situation communicative est donnée aux étudiants, mais cette fois vous montrez à votre amie les photos que vous avez fait avec les symboles.

- Quel sont les symboles qui caractérise la France ?
- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| F. Le drapeau        | I. La tour Eiffel |
| G. L'arc du Triomphe | J. Le Louvre      |
| H. La fleur de lys   |                   |



**Procédures :** Le professeur écrira au tableau une liste avec les symboles de la France, puis il va montrer aux étudiants les images. Les étudiants devront dire oralement la bonne réponse.

**Matériel:** des photos avec quelques symboles représentatives de France.

## **Thème 2 : Bonjour !**

**Fonction communicative:** demander et donner information personnel.  
*Comment vous appelez-vous ?*

### **Objective des exercices:**

*À la fin de ces exercices les apprenants devront maîtriser le contenu de l'unité afin de renforcer leur politesse et manières en se servant des exercices orales.*



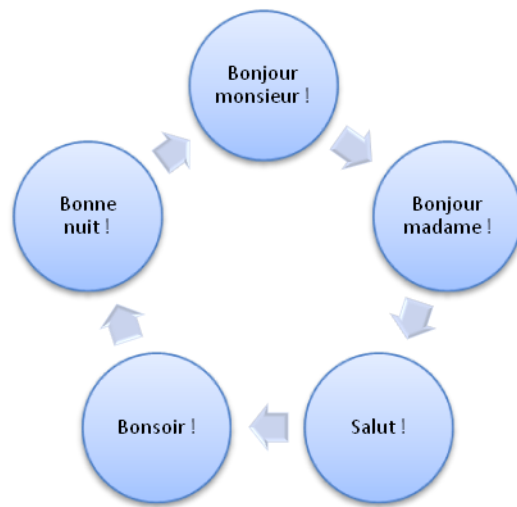
## **Activité 3 :**

**Titre :** Les salutations et les adieux

**Duration: 15 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Imaginez-vous que tu es dans une école française, comment est -que vous saluez aux camarades ?



- Bonjour monsieur !
- Bonjour madame !

**Procédures :** Le prof écrive au tableau les différentes formes de saluer en français au même temps qu'il les explique. Le prof demande aux étudiants de répéter. Il corrige les erreurs et demande aux étudiants de pratiquer à deux. Après les étudiants devront jouez les rôles.

**Matériel :** -----

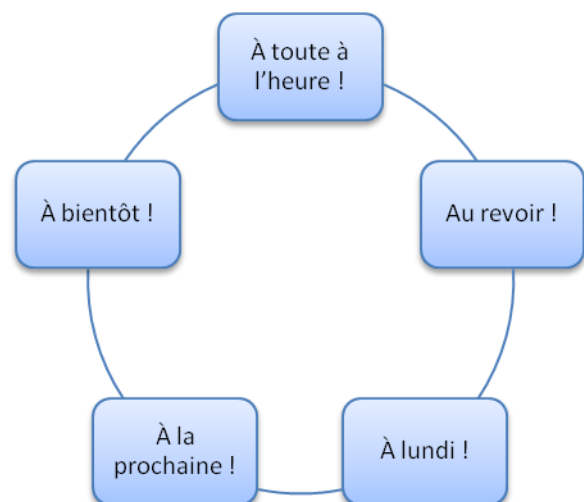
**Activité 4:**

**Titre : Dire au revoir**

**Duration: 15 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Imaginez-vous que tu es dans une école française, comment est que vous dites au revoir ?



- Au revoir

Marie !

- À la prochaine Pierre !

**Procédures :** Le prof écrit au tableau les différentes formes de dire au revoir en français au même temps qu'il les explique. Le prof demande aux étudiants de répéter. Il corrige les erreurs et demande aux étudiants de pratiquer à deux. Après les étudiants devront jouer les rôles.

Matériel. -----

### Activité 5 :

**Titre :** Comment vas-tu ?

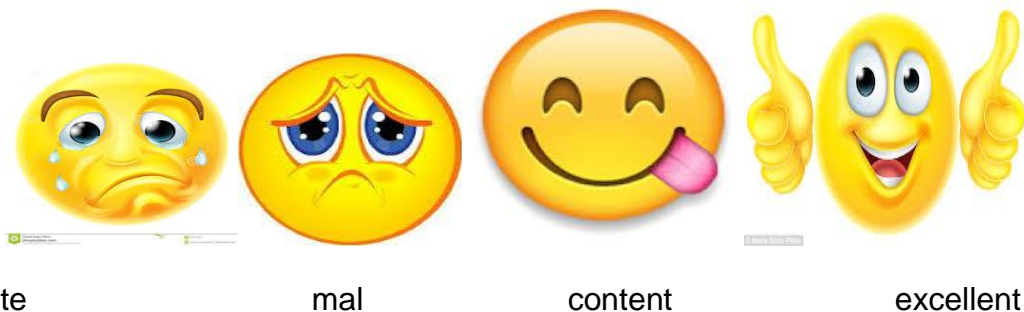
**Duration:** 25 minutes

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Demandez l'état d'humeur à une amie dans le voisinage dans la même situation communicative.

- Après les vacances d'été.
- Si vous lui visitez et il est malade.
- Dans son anniversaire.
- Si vous vous rencontrez à la plage.

Comment allez-vous ? / Comment vas-tu ?



**Procédures :** Le prof va donner aux étudiants des images avec des figures qui représentent différents états d'humeur. Le prof va travailler avec la prononciation de sons comme (-r, en triste, et très.). Le prof va écrire les formes de demander comment on va au tableau, et lui-même va répondre les questions en choisissant une image. Après, le prof demandera à chaque étudiant comment il va, l'étudiant doit répondre comme dans l'exemple.

**Matériel :** des images qui représentent des sentiments.

### Activité 6 :





**Titre : On se rencontre**

**Duration: 25 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Vous vous rencontrez avec ton meilleur ami à la plage, et vous avez une petite conversation. Complétez le dialogue avec les différentes salutations que vous connaissez. Soyez poli !

- Bonjour, ma chère Mathilde !
  - \_\_\_\_\_, Bénédicte, \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- Bien, merci, \_\_\_\_\_ ?
  - Ça va bien, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Procédures :** En groupes, les étudiants vont compléter le dialogue avec les différentes salutations qu'ils connaissent, puis ils vont choisir la meilleure paire pour faire une représentation du dialogue pour tout le groupe.

**Matériel :** -----

**Activité 7 :**

**Titre : Salut mon ami**

**Duration: 30 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Deux amis déjà connus se saluent. Jouez les rôles avec votre copain et changez les sentiments.

Jack : Bonjour, Julie !

Julie : Bonjour, Jack !

Jack : Comment vas-tu ?

Julie : Très bien, et toi ?

Jack : Je suis très content !



a) Remplacez les sentiments.

**Procédures :** Le prof va faire un Remue-Méninges dont les étudiants doivent dire toutes les formes pour dire comment ils vont. Le prof va écrire les idées au tableau. Le prof donnera aux étudiants un dialogue pour jouer le rôle avec leur



copain. Les étudiants vont jouer les rôles une fois encore, mais en remplissant les sentiments.

*Matériel* : Des images.

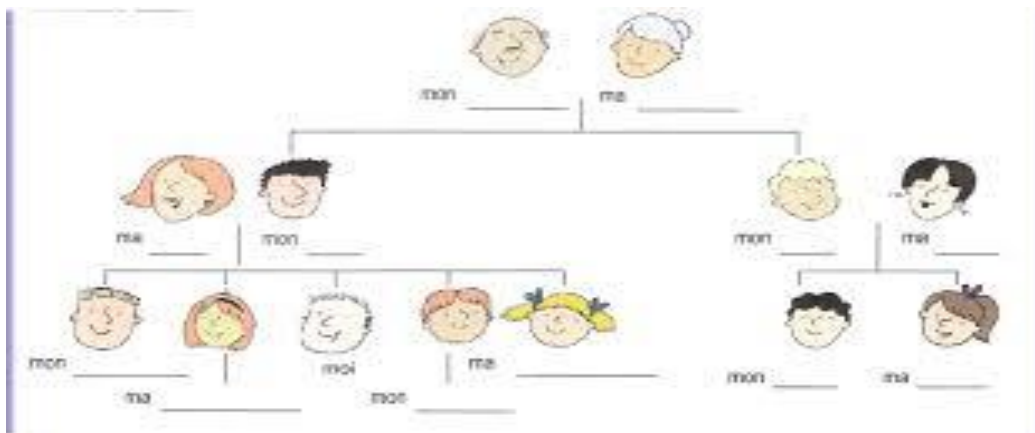
### Activité 8 :

**Titre : Voilà ma famille**

**Duration: 20 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Vous voulez montrer à tes amies françaises de l'internet un projet sur ta famille que tu as fait. Complétez la traduction du projet en français pour qu'ils comprennent.



**Procédures** : Le prof va montrer une charte dont les étudiants doivent dire tous les membres de la famille. Le prof va écrire les réponses à la charte. Le prof demandera aux étudiants d'identifier chaque membre. Les étudiants vont jouer les rôles une fois encore comme le prof, mais en remplissant les membres de la famille.

*Matériel* : Une charte.

### Activité 9:

**Titre : Les professions**

**Duration: 35 minutes**

**Organisation de la salle de classe:**

Complétez des idées avec la profession dans la liste et substituez l'information souligné dans le dialogue suivant.

Deux camarades de l'école élémentaire se sont rencontrés quelques années après.

Jack : Bonjour, Julie !

Julie : Bonjour, Jack !

Jack : Comment va tu ?

Julie : Très bien, et toi ?

Jack : Je suis très content !

Julie : Qu'est-ce que vous faites dans la vie?

Jack : Je suis sculpteur. Et toi ?

Julie : Je suis mécanicien.

Jack : À bientôt !

Julie : À la prochaine !



père est\_\_\_\_\_.

Ma grand-mère est\_\_\_\_\_.

Mon grand-



Ma mère est\_\_\_\_\_.



Mon père est\_\_\_\_\_.



Ma tante est\_\_\_\_\_.



Mon oncle est\_\_\_\_\_.



Mon frère est\_\_\_\_\_.



Ma sœur est\_\_\_\_\_.



Il est \_\_\_\_\_.

**Liste :** athlète ; infirmière ; police ; médecin ; danseur ; étudiant ; secrétaire ; professeur ; menuisier.

**Procédures :** En couple, les étudiants vont compléter des idées avec les différentes professions qu'ils connaissent, puis ils vont compléter le dialogue et jouer le rôle avec leur copain, mais en remplissant l'information souligné. Le profchoisi le meilleur couple pour faire une représentation du dialogue pour tout le group.

**Matériel :** Des images.